

Brass drawings – a look at the depiction of brass bands and bandsmen through the eyes of the cartoonist and illustrator

Gavin Holman – March 2018

Brass bands, their players and instruments have always been ripe subjects for humour. They have been used to poke fun at themselves, and others, to make satirical or political points, to promote products, or just to provide the scene for a joke.

Cartoonists have found the world of brass bands and brass players an inspiration, both in comment on the brass band movement itself and also as reflections on the contemporary political and social scenes.

Original cartoons, from publications such as *Punch*, in the 19th century, are fairly rare but, in the absence of photographs in the press until the later part of the century, cartoons and line drawings were the main methods for illustration.



Both humorous and serious portrayals were produced.

Caricatures of band “celebrities” were often used in the press, in the 1920s to 1950s in particular.

Advertisements in newspapers and magazine featured cartoons regularly and they were also used to illustrate articles and news reports. In the 19th century brass players and instruments were used in advertising leaflets and cards for a wide range of products.

Following the rise in the popularity of postcards from the late 1890s onward, bands and bandsmen made their appearance, both in sentimental depictions and humorous ones. “Greetings from” cards also occasionally featured brass players.

Cartoons and caricatures are still around today, though the photographic and video media far outweigh the line drawn artworks.

This paper gives some examples of the types of illustrations which range over the last 200 years, from serious newspapers and political cartoons to the “seaside” postcard and current cartoonists. A large number of other “brassy” images can be found in the IBEW, at **www.ibew.co.uk/galtub01.htm**

Political images.....	2
Advertising	4
Greetings	6
Musical performances.....	8
Bandsmen and instruments	12
“Seaside” postcards	19
Strange images	23
Current cartoonists	24

Political images

In the 18th century the cartoon as an art form came into its own, through the caricatures of illustrators and engravers such as Hogarth, Townshend, Bunbury and Woodward. Building on the legacy of the earlier Italian great masters of caricature such as Da Vinci and Benini.

The subjects of political cartoons and satirical drawings were seldom treated kindly, indeed some of their treatments would look savage compared to today's equivalents.

Improvements in printing technology and the advent of various "illustrated" newspapers and magazines in the 19th century, such as *Punch*, gave a new platform for the cartoonist and illustrator.

The artists often used allegorical images to make their point, with animals, objects and scenes depicted to reflect their political comment. In some cases the brass band and its musicians assumed this role.





Advertising

Images of players and instruments appeared in illustrated advertisements and promotional material from the early 19th century. In the early 20th century there was even a brand of cigarettes called “Bandmaster” which were available at five for 2d.





A GOOD BAND
deserves a

"UNIQUEP UNIFORM"

Call at our Stand today
and inspect a few of our
latest styles.

**Uniform Clothing & Equipment
Co. Ltd.**

10-11 Clerkenwell Green, London, E.C.1.

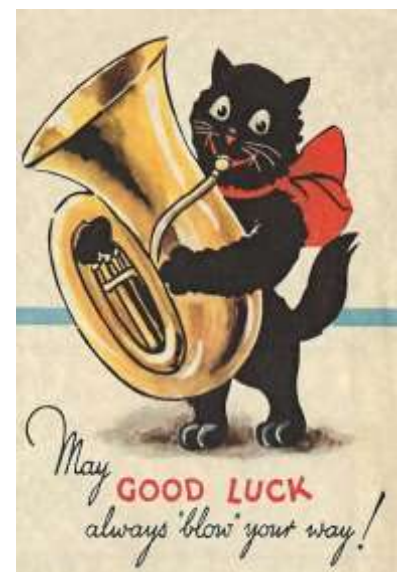
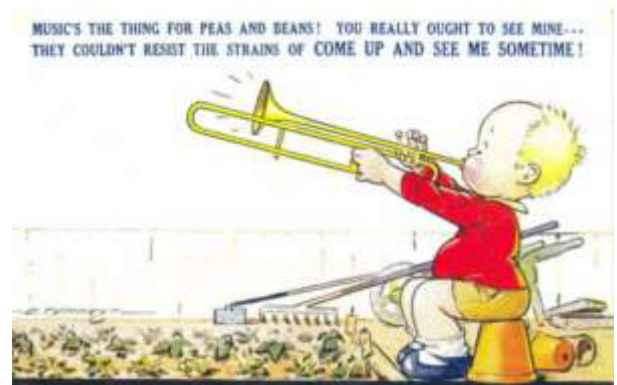
Phones: Clerkenwell 5551/2/3

Grams: UNIQUEP, London.



Greetings

The rise of the picture postcard industry from the 1890s onward gave rise to a huge number of photographic and illustrated cards on a wide range of topics. These were used as a quick and cheap method to send a message and, increasingly, as a souvenir (for the sender or recipient) of a place or occasion. Many of these were the standard topographic cards showing scenes of towns and villages, but others also used artwork to illustrate their messages. These greetings also included the festive holidays such as Christmas and Easter, in addition those of the “wish you were here” sentiment. Where a particular image proved popular it was often used multiple times, being overprinted with the names of different towns. The Morecambe and Dover cards below are examples of this (each having at least six different location variants that I have come across).



Greetings



Musical performances

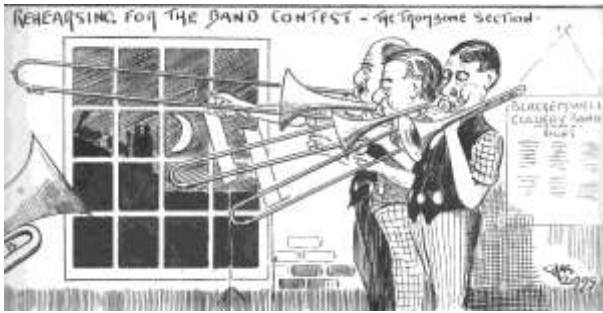
The following images depict bands and players in the act of performing including, at the end of this section, some caricatures of famous past conductors.



"SLEEP, GENTLE SLEEP!"
2 A.M. Portrait of a Gentleman who attended the Brass Band Contest and Festival at the Crystal Palace.

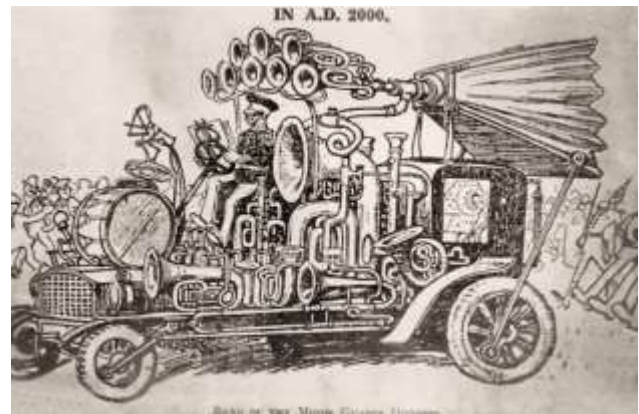


JANSEN'S TRAVESTY BAND.
PRECEDING BANDS AND COMPOSITIONS OF NOVEL FORMS COMPOSED
EXCRUCIATINGLY HUMOROUS. — ARTISTICALLY A TRIUMPH.



"Mr. Joseph Hollenden, writing in 'The Musical Standard,' says, 'To attract attention you must make a noise, an assembly noise if you can't make any other.' Mr. Wilkins informs us that while training for the next brass band contest in his back garden he put Mr. Hollenden's argument to the test and found him correct."



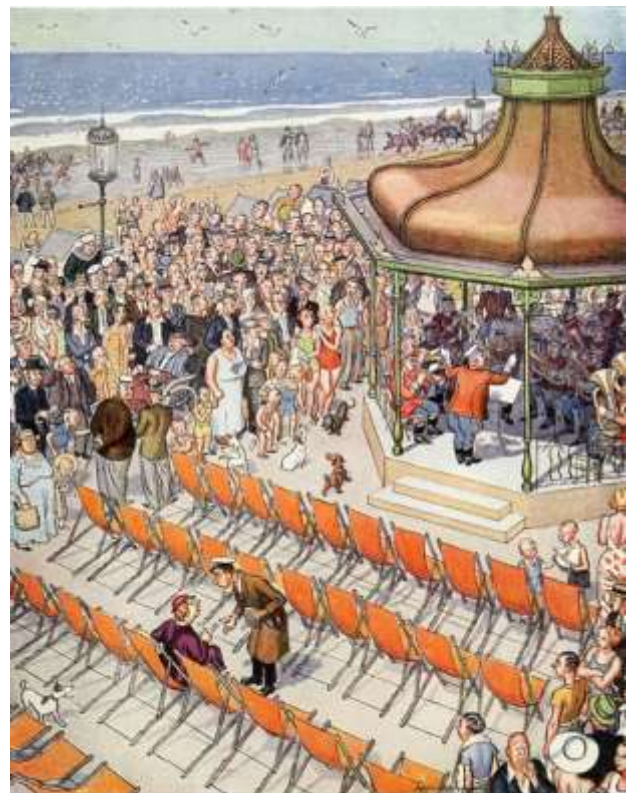
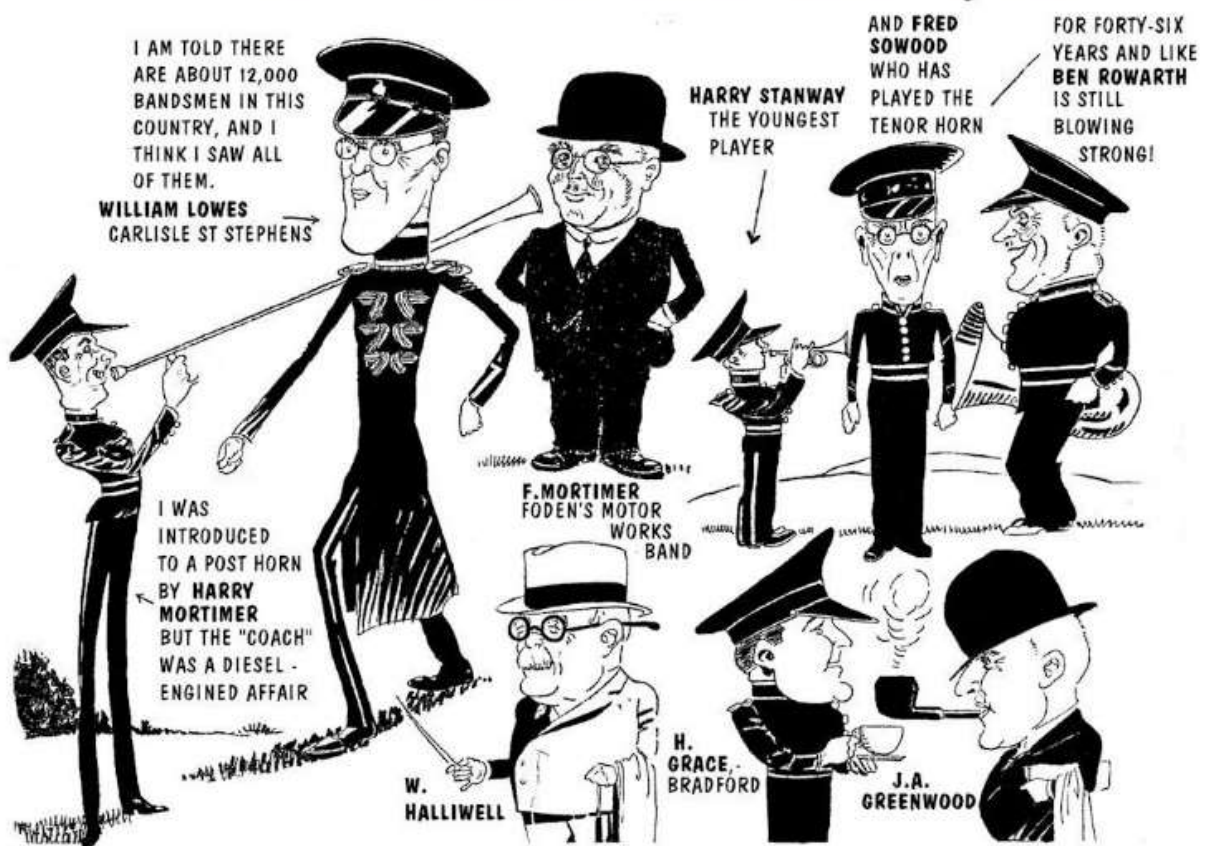


"OK, they've all gone. We'll have a quick blast of 'The Stripper' and push off home."



"Where there's muck there's brass!"

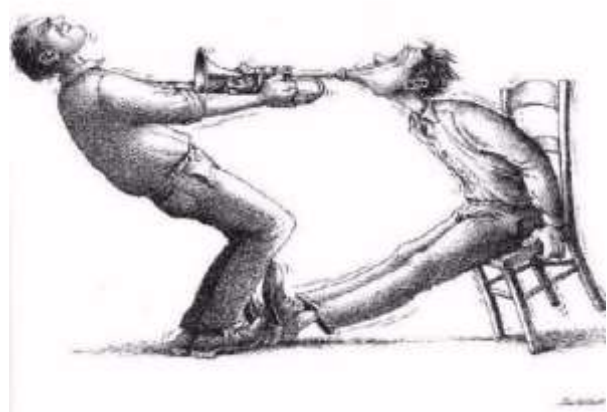
BLACK AND WHITE OF THE BRASS BANDS—By NIX



"Oh! ... Oh! ... I thought about that when I was."

Bandsmen and instruments

Instruments and their players featured often as illustrations on cards, cartoons and similar graphic products. In particular, the trombone and tuba, perhaps because of their more comedic aspects, were predominant.



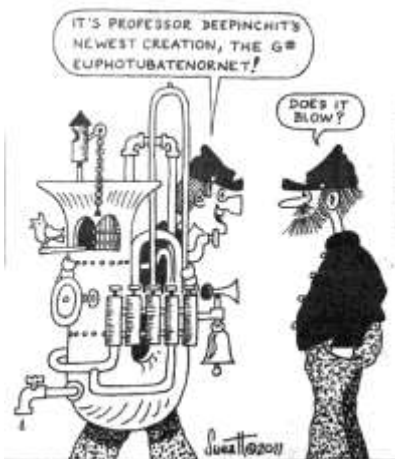


IT TAKES AN EXPERT TO PLAY A TROMBONE IN A PHONE BOOTH



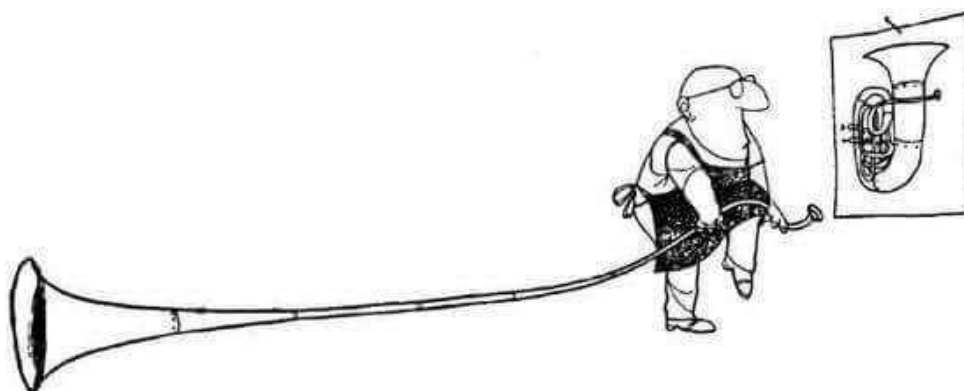
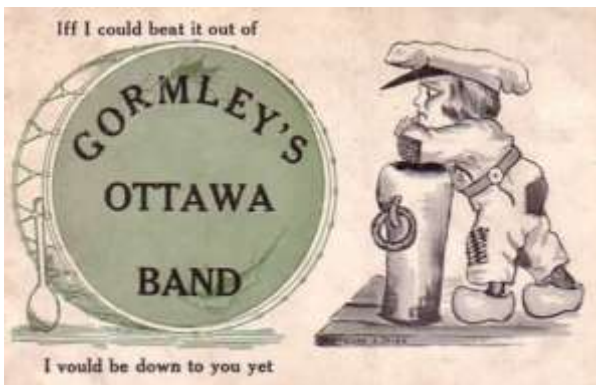


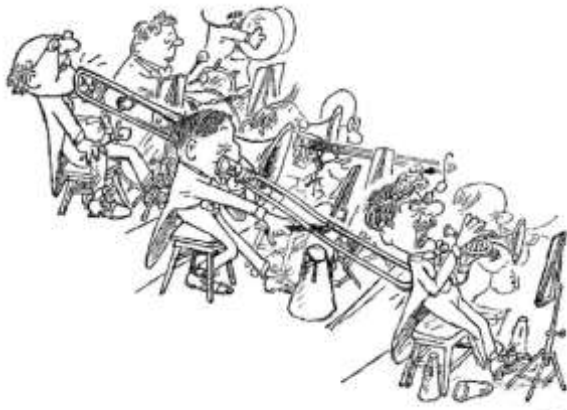




19th century band instruments came in all shapes and sizes.







The Bass Trombone

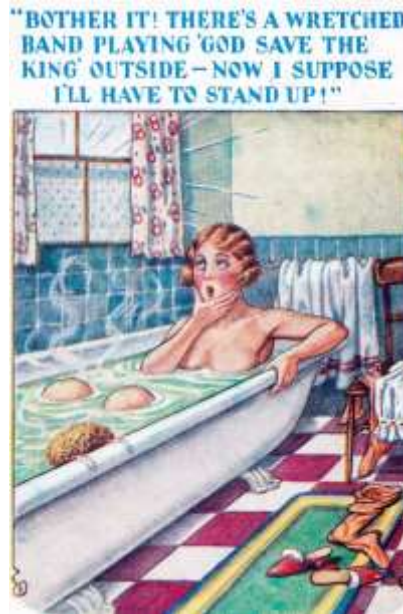


THE FAMILY EUPHONIUM



"Seaside" postcards

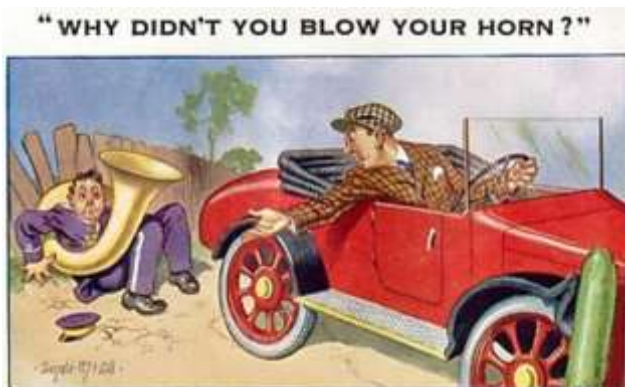
In the early 1930s a new type of postcard became widespread. Concentrating on the British love of the seaside and holidays, they showed cartoon style images with usually punning messages and, quite often, of a "saucy" nature, complete with double entendres and ambiguous phrases. The publishers Bamforth, and the illustrator Donald McGill were the major producers during this time, which lasted until the 1950s, when the British government tried to crack down on their publication, and the 1960s, when public attitudes started to change. This type of postcard is still available, but it is nowhere near as popular or numerous as in the past.



"Seaside" postcards



"Seaside" postcards



"Seaside" postcards



"IS THE WIND TROUBLING YOU MISSUS?"
"YES, BUT I'LL BE ALRIGHT WHEN THE BAND STARTS TO PLAY!"



"I hope it's important, he hates being interrupted during his trombone practice."

Strange images

A few weird images that, even if they don't defy explanation, at least give you cause to scratch your head!



Current cartoonists

The illustrators of today are still taking their inspiration from the world of bands, bandsmen and brass instruments. One of the leading cartoonists of brass bands is Nezzy (Rob Nesbitt) (www.nezzyonbrass.com) whose distinctive style and wit have gained him many admirers in the brass band community. Tim Leatherbarrow (www.timleatherbarrow.com) also has a selection of cartoons featuring the world of brass, among his many other topics.



No sax please: We're British
(Apologies to the similarly named comedy play by Foot & Marriot in 1971)



Suspicious over her Gucci bag were confirmed when Ted produced a brand new Trombone



